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ABSTRACT

The major findings and recommendations of a needs assessment study of Oklahoma libraries are summarized. Recommendations focus on public libraries; however, school, academic, and special libraries also participated in this survey. Top priority needs include: more professionally trained librarians; continuing professional education; additional state funding; cooperation among Oklahoma counties to provide improved library service; strong leadership and a larger professional staff at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) to carry out its mission as a responsible state agency; sharing of library resources--materials and staff specialists--for more effective money budgeting; improved communications between libraries and ODL; written objectives and needs assessment of users to improve library service to the community; direction and education for promotion of cooperative activities between all types of libraries; and investigation of different methods of cooperation in which all libraries can participate. A more in-depth analysis of needs and recommendations may be found in the complete report. (Author/MBR)

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SUMMARY REPORT

on

A NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY OF OKLAHOMA LIBRARIES

for

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES

May 1978

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SUMMARY

This summary document highlights the findings and recommendations of a Needs Assessment Study of Oklahoma libraries. The study was commissioned by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries in May, 1977. Battelle's Columbus Laboratories was the successful bidder in the competition to select a contractor to carry out the study. A Library Needs Assessment Study is designed to analyze where the needs for improvement and change are in the state; it does not analyze the successes of libraries or library agencies. This report focuses on what needs to be done rather than discussing the past accomplishments. Much good work has been done in Oklahoma to build its libraries, and if it seems that we have glossed over this achievement, it is because our job was to concentrate on the needs and to provide valid information for decision making and progress.

This report represents the analysis of information and data on Oklahoma libraries. It concentrates on the public libraries; however, the school, academic, and special libraries also participated in our survey. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries and Battelle recognize the increasing trend toward interlibrary cooperation. For this reason, we tried to involve as many different types of libraries as possible in the study. We also realized that decision makers in Oklahoma communities needed to be involved; therefore, we surveyed several hundred community leaders across the state. We collected several thousand pieces of information from these sources and used a computer to help us analyze it. A complete set of the computer printouts is available for inspection at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

The top priority issues facing Oklahoma libraries in 1978 are those concerned with

(1) Personnel to staff the libraries
(2) Funding for libraries
(3) Cooperation among all types of libraries
(4) Communications among libraries, their communities, and state and local government.

We have concentrated on these issues in our analysis and recommendations. This summary document does not include all the recommendations. The reader is referred to the complete report for the in-depth analysis and assessment of Oklahoma libraries.

On behalf of the Battelle Project Team, we would like to thank the many hundreds of individuals in Oklahoma communities who gave of their time to help us collect the information needed for this project. We have enjoyed our work in Oklahoma and appreciate the friendly welcome you gave us.

Beverly A. Rawles
Arthur E. Smith
Michael B. Wessells
Dorothy M. Sinclair,
Lead Consultant

May, 1978

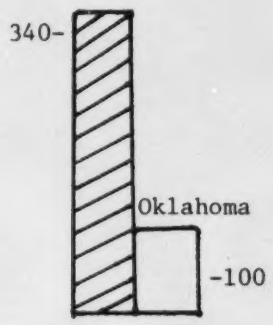
TRAINED LIBRARIANS

Need:	Oklahoma needs more professionally trained librarians to staff the public libraries.

There are only 100 professionally trained librarians in Oklahoma's 125 public libraries. However, most of these are concentrated in only 22 libraries.

More than half of the libraries that do not participate in multi-county or metropolitan city-county systems have no professional librarians at all. Half of the systems libraries have two or fewer professional librarians on their staffs.

The lack of trained librarians is the most serious deficiency of Oklahoma public libraries. Oklahoma falls far short of the ratio called for in Oklahoma Public Libraries Goals for '75, as illustrated below.



Professional Librarians Required
to Meet the Standard

RECOMMENDATION

Oklahoma public libraries should hire additional trained professional librarians at competitive salaries.

Many Oklahoma public libraries have budgets so small that they cannot afford to hire even a beginning librarian. The only possible way for them to acquire the professional help they need is to join other librarians in cooperative arrangements so the staff can be shared.

Trained staff is the key to improved library service in the state.

Oklahoma needs to hire some librarians from out of state so that a broader perspective and different ideas might be introduced.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANS

NEED:	Oklahoma librarians need additional continuing education opportunities to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

Many untrained librarians are unable to leave their jobs to participate in continuing education workshops. They have no help to keep the library open while they go to Oklahoma City or elsewhere for training, and they have no money for travel expenses.

Many untrained librarians want instruction in basic areas of librarianship such as accounting and budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

Oklahoma needs to provide basic education and training in librarianship to untrained librarians where they work.

Workshops, two-way television, and "circuit riders" (librarians who can be detached temporarily from professional positions to travel to nearby towns and offer instruction to local library staff members) are needed to provide training near enough home for librarians to participate.

Community libraries with only one staff member should recruit volunteers to run the library on days the librarian needs to go for training.

Two-way television has been used effectively in 60 communities across the state to provide a Library Technical Assistant (LTA) program. Further use of this type of activity should be investigated.

Cooperative arrangements with other libraries are needed to help alleviate the lack or unavailability of professional staff to provide in-service training.

FUNDING FROM THE STATE

NEED:	Oklahoma needs additional funds from the State to develop library services to Oklahoma citizens.

Currently, state aid to Oklahoma's public libraries is $275,725. The distribution of this money across the state looks like the following:

Amount	Number of Libraries Receiving	Percent
Less than $100	11	9.6
100-200	29	25.2
200-500	28	24.3
500-1000	22	19.2
1000-2000	10	8.7
2000-5000	6	5.2
5000-20,000	5	4.3
More than 20,000	4	3.5
TOTAL	115	100.0

Almost 60 percent of the libraries will receive less than $500. More than 34 percent will receive less than $200. The amount of material or services that can be added for this amount of money is quite small. Two-hundred dollars, for example, will add less than two books per month to a collection. Spreading state aid across the state and achieving any sort of significant service or materials expansion for most Oklahoma libraries will call for a larger state aid appropriation than the $275,725.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Oklahoma Legislature should increase the State aid appropriation to a level that will significantly aid the development of library services in the state.

This recommendation supports the position that the state has a responsibility for the education of its people. We have noted in this report that the public libraries of Oklahoma are heavily used by school students. In today's world, adults are increasingly aware of their needs for continuing education and many of them must turn to the only institution in their communities that have the potential to meet this need--the local public library. The coming decade will require greatly improved public libraries to meet these needs.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should study its State aid formula, particularly as it concerns new money in the future, with an objective of using State aid grants as incentives for the formation of new cooperative arrangements.

We support ODL's Standards for State Aid Grants which ties State aid to local support for libraries. We are concerned, however, that future new money for State aid be used for statewide library development. This means that future money would not be so diluted and thinly spread as ODL's present plan proposes. It would be used as incentive grants to develop new cooperative arrangements.

LIBRARY SYSTEMS AND COOPERATION

Oklahoma's consolidated systems have been an effective way to bring expanded library services to wide areas of the state. Many libraries, however, are not presently affiliated with these systems.

The primary reasons given by the unaffiliated libraries in answer to our question, "Why is your library not a part of a system?" are listed below:

- Systems might improve library services to our area, but decisions would be made by those outside our area and we prefer our autonomy.
- Our library gives library service that is sufficient for the needs of our area, so we have no need to become part of a system.
- Voters cannot be persuaded that systems services are worth the additional tax.

These are valid and compelling reasons in several areas of the state. Many presently unserved residents of Oklahoma counties, however, would benefit from cooperation between libraries in a geographic area, or between city and county governments to ensure that quality library service is made available to all Oklahoma residents.

NEED:	There is a need in Oklahoma for all counties to participate in cooperative arrangements to provide improved library services.

During the Needs Assessment Study, we were told that loss of local control or autonomy was the main reason unaffiliated counties would not join systems. Yet more than 80 percent of the counties that are in systems report that the system is not an encroachment on local authority. In interviews we learned that the librarians feel uncertainty about the new identity that the library gets as a part of a system more than simply loss of autonomy.

RECOMMENDATION

Oklahoma should develop feasible alternatives to the current consolidated systems which will permit all counties to join together in cooperative arrangements.

We believe it is necessary for Oklahoma to move toward alternatives to the consolidated systems, although they work quite well in the geographic locations where they currently exist. Their workability in these areas and the general satisfaction with them were borne out by the positive evaluations given by system librarians within the state.

In studying the libraries with no system affiliation, we identified what is lacking in their programs:

1. Paid-for and meaningful service to the unincorporated area surrounding the city. Many of the cities allow the county people to have free service, but this is offered as a privilege and not a right. Furthermore, it is the city's service, not appropriate and convenient service for a rural area such as a system provides.
2. Professional leadership. Most unaffiliated libraries lack directors with library degrees.
3. Economy of scale, with resulting justifiable volume and breath of resources and staff specialization. Unaffiliated libraries in medium-sized cities should compare their services not with those available to systems in sparsely populated parts of the state, but with those given in the metropolitan areas. It is this level that they can approach cooperatively.

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES

NEED:	Oklahoma public libraries expect strong leadership from ODL.

The Needs Assessment Study showed that Oklahoma public librarians ranked as number one in importance the role of ODL in providing leadership and support for libraries in the state. Second in importance to them was ODL's role in developing library service where there is none and improving library service where it is inadequate. These findings reflect a clear mandate of what the libraries expect from ODL.

NEED:	ODL needs more professional staff if it is to carry out its mission as a fully responsive state library agency.

Additional staff is needed by ODL if it is to provide the services the public librarians say they need. ODL has a staff shortage that will not permit it to provide a full line of services including:

- Accrediting of libraries
- Sufficient in-service training for librarians
- More research on problems
- More response to the information needs of state government
- Adequate evaluation of Federally funded programs and projects
- Analysis of statistics on libraries
- Dissemination of information about programs around the state
- Adequate field visits to libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ODL should continue to focus its attentions on the entire state in its provision of leadership and support to libraries.

There is no question that the public librarians appreciate ODL's efforts to provide leadership and support to libraries in the state. This function plus the development of library service where there is none or where it is inadequate are the primary functions which librarians count on from ODL.

ODL's budget should be increased so that it can provide a full line of services to Oklahoma libraries.

In our study of Oklahoma libraries, we have identified several situations that require additional effort by ODL. The situations or factors are as follows:

(1) Many unaffiliated libraries have untrained directors and many systems directors have complex management problems. Both groups need to have a place to get the professional expertise and help they need.

(2) A lacking of statewide concensus on what is best for Oklahoma, e.g., standards of library service for Oklahoma, incentive funds to encourage cooperation, and different options for multi-county systems.

(3) A lacking of research on library problems, e.g., the development of alternative types of library service that would better "fit" certain areas of the state, and the development of cost data on various kinds of library service that could be supplied to local community decision makers.

(4) More statewide visibility of ODL, its director, and staff is needed. There should be more field visits and more educational workshops for libraries.

RESOURCE SHARING

NEED: There is a need for all libraries in Oklahoma to share their resources, including materials and staff specialists, if more effective use is to be made of budgeted dollars.

The Needs Assessment Study showed that libraries of all types believe that the sharing of resources is desirable and necessary. About 90 percent of the non-system public libraries said that they feel resources should be shared with few restrictions.

Most of the public libraries who answered our question on what cooperative activities they felt were most suitable said:

1) Reciprocal borrowing privileges
2) Expanded interlibrary loan services, including photocopy and document delivery.
3) Resource sharing

The non-system libraries generally are the smaller ones and must depend upon the large libraries or the Oklahoma Department of Libraries to meet their needs for materials they cannot afford to buy.

The non-system libraries reported that they do not have the staff or the knowledge of how to go about initiating cooperative arrangements. To them, the sharing of resources and the expanding and improving of existing services are the most important reasons for interlibrary cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should promote resource sharing by (a) providing equitable reimbursement to the net lenders and (b) developing workshops designed to teach librarians more about cooperative arrangements and their implementation.

The large libraries would not object to lending material to the small libraries if they did not have to absorb most of the costs.

ODL should expand its continuing education effort to utilize all available resources and focus on the needs for learning of all areas and librarians in the state.

ODL should work to decentralize continuing education activities as much as possible to make it easier for librarians in remote areas of Oklahoma to get the training they need.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries is to be commended for its quality service and dedication to continuing education for librarianship in Oklahoma. The ODL staff should continue to give close attention to how the continuing education program should develop in the areas of (1) what is offered and (2) where it is offered.

COMMUNICATIONS
LIBRARIES AND ODL

NEED: An improved communications system between ODL and Oklahoma libraries is needed if libraries are to make full use of ODL services.

Libraries were asked how often they contact ODL and which services they use most. More than 50 percent of the libraries contact ODL once a year or less except for interlibrary loan. This would indicate some communication difficulty between the libraries and ODL.

NEED: A toll-free number is needed at ODL to provide easy access to the ODL staff and services.

A toll-free number would make a great deal of difference in providing better communications between the libraries and ODL. During our survey, about 75 percent of the libraries supported a need for this toll-free service.

NEED: ODL needs to continue its efforts to inform local community decision makers of its services and functions which are available to them.

We learned that 65 percent of the community leaders were quite familiar with the work of ODL. This high percentage reflects ODL's continuing efforts to provide information to community decision makers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ODL should take steps to improve communications with the libraries in the State.

Libraries were asked which ODL services they had used during the past 3-year period including the following:

	% All Libraries	Number Non-Systems	Number Systems
• Used the Oklahoma Teletype Inter-library System	77	44	25
• Used the film service	54	22	27
• Used consultant for planning	49	32	12
• Assistance in grant application	37	22	13
• Used juvenile book evaluation center	36	17	15
• Government documents or reference	23	12	9

Interlibrary loan via OTIS is by far the service heaviest used. This may reflect the relatively easy access to communications channels through OTIS.

ODL should install a toll-free telephone service to improve communications with the libraries in the State.

The ODL Director and Board should consider action on this recommendation as soon as possible.

The Director of ODL should issue a special publication to library trustees and other community leaders to keep them informed on statewide library services and trends.

A publication of this type could be part of ODL's expanded statewide information and public relations program to improve visibility of all public libraries. It could help to combat the relative isolation of Oklahoma public library trustees from national and state issues and trends and might stimulate their interest and involvement in the Oklahoma Library Association.

COMMUNICATIONS
LIBRARY AND THE COMMUNITY

NEED:	Oklahoma public libraries need written objectives based upon community analysis and accepted state standards of library service.

Libraries should involve their communities in local library needs analysis so that library services which are provided meet these needs and are the services the people want.

There is also a need for Oklahomans to communicate with their libraries to let them know what services they want.

At the same time, community decision makers need to know that the services their libraries are providing meet minimum standards for good library services. State standard should be used as guidelines for developing services and collections.

NEED:	Library users need to speak up to make known their desires for quality library service to local and state government.

The recent Oklahoma Governor's Conference on Libraries and Information Services set the stage for involving lay people and librarians in a dialogue concerning the problems facing Oklahoma's libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ODL should continue its program of teaching public libraries to assess the needs of their communities for quality library services and to set standards based on meaningful criteria that will result in upgraded and improved services.

Only 10 percent of the libraries reported that objectives for their libraries were formulated or reviewed by anyone outside the library board, library director, or the library staff. Although a number of libraries reported doing a needs analysis of their community, they did not involve people from the community in planning library services.

Library users throughout the state should make known their desire for quality library service to funders at all appropriate levels.

Ultimately it is the local citizen who uses libraries who is the decision maker. History has shown that those who demand good services, whether they be good schools, good libraries, or good parks, will get them. The foundations built during the Governor's Conference on Libraries and Information Services should be used to involve citizens in all parts of the state in efforts to improve libraries.

The Oklahoma Governor's Conference on Libraries and Information Services should be followed up by the conference delegates from each geographic region of the state in the form of mini-conferences to educate local citizens on the needs of libraries.

INTERLIBRARY COOPERATION

NEED:	Oklahoma librarians need direction and education in their cooperative activities.

Although libraries are willing to cooperate, they need assistance in developing a forum for discussion and expert advice on cooperative possibilities.

During the coming decade libraries will engage extensively in the sharing of their resources. Oklahoma librarians favor resource-sharing and believe it is necessary and important. It is our prediction that different types of libraries will find it beneficial to join in multitype library cooperative arrangements. During the needs assessment study, we also learned that some librarians in Oklahoma believe it would be beneficial to present library systems if other types of libraries were permitted to join. We received the following responses to this question:

	Type of library that would be a useful member of a system	Number of public librarians who think so
1.	University and college libraries	29
2.	Libraries in government	20
3.	Institutional libraries	20
4.	Special libraries in business and industry	17
5.	School libraries	14
	Total	100

RECOMMENDATION

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should assist in establishing and funding multitype area cooperatives. These cooperatives would be multitype organizations formed for the purpose of discussing and organizing cooperative arrangements in these areas.

ODL should draw up general guidelines in conjunction with the Network Advisory Council and LSCA Advisory Council. Libraries in various areas should meet together and begin to discuss what cooperation could be achieved in their own areas. The area libraries would draw up their own proposal for services they wish provided.

ODL can serve as a resource to libraries to increase their knowledge of cooperative arrangements. ODL can supply information on costs, methods of funding, geographic barriers, economic problems, and population trends.

INTERLIBRARY COOPERATION

> NEED: There is a need in Oklahoma to explore the feasibility of different methods of cooperation in which all types of libraries can join.

Despite a generally conducive climate for interlibrary cooperation, there are some barriers. Public and academic libraries ranked the most significant barriers to cooperation as indicated.

Barriers to Interlibrary Cooperation

	Public Library	
	First Place Votes	Second Place Votes
Fear of Loss of Autonomy	24	12
Lack of Public Interest	19	25
Lack of Knowledge	15	7
Lack of Money	11	13

	Academic Library	
	First Place Votes	Second Place Votes
Lack of Money	10	2
Public Apathy	6	8
Staff Resistance	6	6
Local Autonomy	5	5
Lack of Knowledge	4	9

RECOMMENDATION

The Oklahoma Library Code should be amended to provide for cooperative systems in which different types of libraries can become participants.

Reasons for Interlibrary Cooperation

	First Place Votes		Second Place Votes	
	Public	Academic	Public	Academic
1. To expand services	36	19	26	9
2. To share resources	22	12	22	17
3. For special projects	13	3	12	5
4. To cut costs	8	1	13	4

Interestingly, both groups see more value in cooperative arrangements other than strictly sharing resources, and both groups rank service over cost. Most school libraries report (62%) that they see a benefit in cooperative arrangements, but a surprising number (35%) answered they see no benefit or have no opinion.

The Oklahoma Library code should be amended to permit Oklahoma to participate in a national library network and to designate ODL as the coordinator or Oklahoma's Statewide Network.

As the national network evolves, the role of the states should be supported through legislation. The national network can be developed only through these state building blocks. Each state will need a coordinating agency to dispense funds and undertake statewide network planning.